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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a survey of methods courses at colleges and universities in Wisconsin associated with the training of prospective secondary teachers in communication. A questionnaire was administered to the 15 colleges and universities which offer a major and/or minor in what is called "speech" as certified by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The results of the questionnaire were as follows: most of the institutions offered two credits for the methods course; with two exceptions the grading system was found to be the traditional ABCDF procedure; approximately half of the institutions indicated that the instructor of their methods course held a joint appointment with education; only three institutions indicated that the methods course was ever taught on a team basis; eight institutions indicated that there were followup courses to the methods class; and of the institutions surveyed four major units of instruction emerged as most prominent--philosophy-definition, lesson plans, evaluation and testing, and micro-teaching experiences. As a result of the survey two major needs emerged; a need for a reasonably coherent set of categories by which the field might be apportioned and a need for a generic definition of the basic set which unites the discipline. (WR)

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When I see I am doing it wrong, there is a part of me that wants to keep on doing it the same way anyway and even starts looking for the reasons to justify the continuation.[1]

Hugh Prather
Notes to Myself

COMMUNICATION: A SURVEY OF TODAY'S METHODS COURSES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TOMORROW'S DISCIPLINE

James D. Moe and Elizabeth A Kyes

With education facing critical scrutiny, perhaps there is no better time to take stock of who we are, where we are, and what we are doing lest we inadvertently sacrifice professional growth by "justifying" our "continuation" in the name of academic tradition. And, perhaps, there is no better indicator of how we define ourselves and our mutual goal than the content and structure of the single course in our discipline designed to elaborate these data for those who are to go forth and perpetuate our field — the methods course.

This paper investigates and comments upon the substantive understandings and procedural techniques associated with the training of prospective secondary teachers of communication in the state of Wisconsin.

A questionnaire was administered to the following colleges/universities in the state. It represents those responding institutions which offer a major and/or minor in what is called "speech" as certified by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction:

Alverno College
Carroll College
Marquette University
Ripon College
St. Norbert College
UW-Eau Claire
UW-Madison
UW-LaCrosse
UW-Milwaukee
UW-Oshkosh
UW-Platteville
UW-River Falls
UW-Stevens Point
UW-Superior
UW-Whitewater

Results from seven areas of inquiry into methods courses and related aspects will be presented and discussed with some corresponding recommendations. The final section of the paper addresses major implications which emerge from the findings pursuant to the future of the field.

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Credit Hours

Credit Hours for Methods Courses

Number of Credits		2	3	4
Currently	*r	9	5	1
Number of Credits		2	3	4
Preferred	r	4	8	3
Allocation of Credits		Comm.	Educ.	Both
Currently	r	4	10	1

* Represents institutional responses

Table 1

While most of the institutions surveyed offer two credits for the methods course, an even greater number desire a credit hour increase. There was apparent dissatisfaction with the limited time of a two-credit course. It was generally felt that a minimum of three credits should be allocated, and in three cases, four credits was recommended. Perhaps the Wisconsin Communication Association should consider formulating a policy statement endorsing a credit increase to assist those institutions that are seeking such a change.

While 10 of 15 schools surveyed claimed "education" credit for the communication methods course, there are four institutions in the state whose departments of communication receive credit hour production for the same course. In light of recent austerity measures credit hour production has become an important issue. It would seem, then, that knowledge of such a precedent might prove useful, particularly if the rationale were provided for such a credit hour allocation. While this survey did not seek that information we would recommend the publication of those respective justifications for the benefit of WCA Journal readers.

Grading

Methods Course Grading

System		Pass-Fail	ABCDF	Other
	r	1	13	1
"C" grade implies		Average	Weak	Very Weak
	r	4	10	1

Table 2

With only two exceptions the grading system for methods courses was found to be the traditional ABCDF procedure. The survey also sought to determine the nature of a recommendation associated with a "C" grade earned in the methods course. Ten of the institutions felt that a "C" grade was "weak" with one contending "very weak."

It would be interesting to know the percentage of ABCD or F grades issued in a methods course as compared to other courses, particularly in light of the rather weak recommendations associated with the traditionally average "C" grade. One respondent reported, "It is expected that a "B" will be earned in the methods course." The question arises: Are we sacrificing responsible discrimination in grading procedures in order to meet that expectation? Surely, no one is willing to argue that every class represents a cross-section of "A" through "F" but it would appear that in methods courses the instructor's option has been reduced to "A" through "C." Perhaps this situation is more apparent than real. But if there is any legitimacy to this observation then there is a critical need for further investigation and appropriate resolution to such questions which seek to explore: the extent to which students should be screened prior to being admitted to the methods course, the degree of difficulty characterizing the course, and the nature of recommendations forwarded from the methods course.

Instructor Data

Instructor Data

Is the course team-taught?	Yes	No	Occasionally
	r - 1	12	2
Does the instructor hold a joint appointment with Education?			
	r - 7	8	
Is the instructor certified for secondary level teaching?			
	r - 12	3	
Has the instructor ever taught at the secondary level?			
	r - 12	3	

If yes, how many years?	1-3	3-5	5-10	Over 10 years
r - 4	2	4	2	

Table 3

Approximately one-half of the institutions surveyed indicated that the instructor of their respective methods course held a joint appointment with education. 12 of the 15 instructors were certified for secondary level instruction and the same number claimed high school teaching experience.

Only three institutions indicated that the methods course was ever taught on a team basis. The low figure associated with team teaching seems to us a sacrifice of considerable pedagogical potential. Effective team teaching can be most rewarding for all concerned. Team teaching provides a wider offering of available perspectives, spontaneous interchange of ideas, and greater potential for individualized instruction, all of which seems inevitably essential for a course which seeks to responsibly prepare teachers for a variety of classroom experiences.

Methods Course Correlates

Eight institutions indicated that there were follow-up courses to the methods class. The nature of those courses included: student teaching seminars, directing speech activities, a junior year of clinical experience in teaching, and a senior seminar. In addition, nine institutions require "activities" courses for those seeking major and/or minor certification.

Professional Education Sequence

Professional Education Sequence

Courses Required for Certification	Number of Institutions Requiring this course as a part of their Professional Education Sequence
*Educational Psychology	** 13
*Secondary Methods in Communication	13
*Student Teaching	13
Philosophy of Education	9
Social Issues and Problems in Education	6
Adolescent Development	5
General Secondary Methods	4
Measurement and Evaluation	4
Secondary School: Curriculum and Org	3
Clinical Experience in Teaching	3
Seminar	3
Audio Visual Aids	1
Health Problems	1
Introduction to Public Speaking	1

* DPI Requirement
** Only 13 institutions supplied data for this question

Table 4

All of the institutions responding to this question require coursework beyond the minimum requirements established by the DPI. However, no two institutions offer the same sequence of courses. In addition to the DPI requirements, a variety of eleven different courses appear in the various professional sequences. Moreover, the maximum amount of required credits for the various sequences ranges from 18 to 32 hours. Perhaps one of the most significant factors in the variance is student teaching. While the DPI requires only 5 credits, the institutions surveyed require from 7 to 12 credit hours of student teaching.

There appears to be little similarity among the various professional education sequences in the state of Wisconsin. Admittedly, the fact that they are different provides little justification for condemnation; however, the considerable variance among the schools would lead us to believe that some means must be established to determine that sequence of courses which we, as a profession, wish to identify as supplemental to the DPI requirements, so as to maximally prepare prospective teachers to meet their professional obligations. Once

established, such a sequence ought to be endorsed by the Wisconsin Communication Association and eventually argued for adoption before the DPI.

Methods Course Structure

Methods Course Structure

Units of Instruction		Number of institutions with this unit in the methods course
Philosophy - Definition	-	8
Lesson Plans	-	7
Evaluation and Testing	-	7
Micro-teaching	-	6
Instructional Strategies	-	3
Comm in the Secondary School	-	3
Text Selection	-	2

Table 5

Of the institutions surveyed four major units of instruction emerged as most prominent in the methods courses: Philosophy-Definition, Lesson Plans, Evaluation and Testing, Micro-teaching Experiences, In addition, the following units were cited at least once: Instructional Strategies, Communication in the Secondary School, Text Selection, Observation of High School Teaching and related activities, Special Interest Reports, Audio-Visual Equipment and Utilization, Co-curricular activities, Listening, Specialized Speech Courses, and English Drama.

The survey also requested supplemental course activities. A synthesis of field observations and practices related to the methods course included: Directing, assisting and judging forensic and debate activities, required one-semester high school observations, observations of university instruction, attending university plays and debates, assisting university instructors in teaching the basic course, participating in student teaching seminars and workshops.

Methods Course Philosophy

Methods Course Philosophy

Theoretical Perspectives	*Institutional Field Apportionment Responses
Rhetoric and Public Address	X X X X X X X X X
Interpersonal Communication	X X X X X X X X X X X
Mass Communication	X X X X X X X X
Communication Theory	X X X X X X
Theatre Arts	X X X X X X X X
Communicative Disorders	X X
Small Group	X X
Oral Interpretation	X X X
Debate	X
Organizational Communication	X
Public Communication	X

Table 6

*Each column represents one Institution's response.

Methods Course Understandings

Major Understandings advanced in the Methods Course	1st Priority	2nd Priority	3rd Priority
Philosophical -	10	0	0
Psychological -	1	6	1
Methodological -	0	1	3
Historical -	1		
Co-Curricular Activities -	1		
Competency Based Instruction	1		

Table 7

Given the alternative theoretical perspectives which serve to apportion our discipline it was our desire to identify those which most frequently informed the methods course within the state of Wisconsin. While four theoretical perspectives emerged as the most commonly employed alternatives (Interpersonal Communication, Rhetoric and Public Address, Mass Communication, and Theatre Arts), only two institutions have indicated identical categories for apportioning the field. Admittedly, we are dealing with a fairly general level of analysis but the diversity among theoretical perspectives is clearly evident, as is the case in most educational institutions offering a similar major. This fact may well be the major obstacle to the successful unification of our discipline. The authors are unable to discern a philosophically sound basis on which these theoretical perspectives represent viable areas of inquiry which, in turn, provide a coherent apportionment of the field.

Since it is deedmed desirable by virtually all of the participating institutions in the survey that philosophical understandings be given first priority in the methods course (see Table 7), then it behooves those of us associated with designing the course to critically challenge our legacy of theoretical perspectives in an attempt to give order to a field bedeviled by proliferation, redundancy, and inherited vageries. Until we recognize and resolve the eclectic inconsistencies inherent within our discipline we cannot achieve the unity implicit in a singly certified major.

Implications

Two principle needs emerge as identified in the foregoing review, which in turn give rise to two particular objectives to be achieved by the adoption of an enlarged conceptual framework for our discipline: (1) pragmatically, a need for a reasonably coherent set of categories by which the field might be apportioned, consistent with a recognized pattern of social behavior identifiable in the "real" world; and (2) philosophically, a need for a generic definition of the basic set which unites our discipline, out of which such an apportionment can be justifiably generated.

Few would quarrel with the wisdom or desirability of these objectives. Certainly anyone who has been called upon to try to logically defend the four academic divisions of Radio-TV-Film — Journalism — Theatre — Public Address, for example, on any grounds other than "separate but equal" status, has come face-to-face with the harsh reality that there exists no single, internally consistent set of criteria that appropriately delineates the categories. The age old debate as to whether Hamlet's soliloquy is "rhetoric" or "poetic" is

merely updated in the idiom of today's haggling over proprietary rights: Is the President's broadcast press conference "public address" or "television" or "radio" or "journalism?"; is televised drama filmed before a live audience "television" or "theatre" or "film?" And, of course, to these questions must be added the frustrations of the "numbers" game: Are six too few or twelve too many for a "small group?" or, when does "interpersonal communication" cease being "interpersonal communication" and begin being "public address?" And equally complex, when does "public address" cease being "public address" and begin being "mass communication?" Obviously, we are not looking to the right characteristics by which to make the distinctions.

Such narrow definitions militate against legitimate extensions of our discipline. Our recommendation, therefore, is to try a new definition altogether, one that may lend itself to wider uses but allow the closest specification in particular contexts. If we were to divest ourselves of the structural restrictions of the now familiar rubrics and turn instead to an identification of the unique characteristics of the basic act common to each paradigm by virtue of the communicative function uniting them, such frustrations might well dissolve; the whole conflict of artificial boundaries based on characteristic form or arbitrary numbers or antiquated psychology or whatever, may be met with happy resolution by looking to the elements which unite rather than divide. In other words, what is called for is a careful and thorough analysis of the communicative act to make reasonably sure that we have identified its genuine parts so as to locate the generic definition which identifies those properties necessarily common to any and all acts of human communication whenever and wherever they occur. What must be ensured is that the definition be truly generic — universal in its applicability. Once accomplished, its application could provide the impetus for a re-dedication to a single, integrated study by the numerous and disperate elements currently pursuing an understanding of the symbolic behavior of man.

To tackle such an undertaking prompts a certain amount of skepticism among the practioners of our field. From one perspective, the term "communication" seems to encompass such a vast and varied assortment of human behavior that some are willing to argue it is impossible to classify and/or synthesize that behavior into a coherent definition; somehow, communication becomes synonymous with living. It certainly can be argued that "to be" may well be "to communicate" but unless the "being" can be distinguished from the "communicating" the statement is a valueless tautology providing little direction save from going around in circles. On the other hand, the alternative perspective which limits communication to that incidental or occasional bit of behavior that people engage in by choice, that they from time to time, as need arises, go out and "do," is equally misleading, and, it would appear, equally appealing for a vast number of communication theorists; perhaps its attraction lies in the ease with which such a perspective lends itself to a physicalistic paradigm and, hence, to "scientific" respectability. Somewhere in between these two divergent perspectives there appears to be, at least intuitively, some thread of meaning that in ordinary usage points toward communication as an act that can be identified, differentiated, and described apart from other forms of behavior, while, at the same time, be recognized as a pervasive feature of the human condition. If the ordinary sense of "communication" and the problematical sense derived from new uses cannot be commensurated, they will simply diverge and multiply until the word has innumerable, virtually unrelated,

meanings — a condition which may soon entrap us; hardly a desirable prospect in an age that dreams of unity of the field. Above all, such a practice would court the danger that attends any word that is simply left undefined; its "meaning" simply increases without limit in vagueness and collects the aura of mythic value that so commonly accrues to illicitly extended terms.

The search for a generic definition rests, in the last analysis, in five socio-psychological premises: (1) the first premise is that the potential for communication is ever-present; (2) the second is that human perception is ever unique; (3) the third, that human communication is transactional rather than interactional; (4) the fourth, that all communication that is uniquely human is necessarily symbolic, and (5) the fifth premise is that all human communication is contextually relational.

A word or two with respect to each premise is in order. The potential for communication is ever-present for wherever "self" is, so, too, is the necessary ingredient for an act of communication (assuming of course that self does not exist in a total void, since "self" is the point of origin for any communicative act. William Ittelsen and Hadley Cantril identify three features of human perception which deserve special attention with respect to the second premise.[3] First, the facts of perception always present themselves through concrete individuals dealing with concrete situations. They can be studied only in terms of the transactions in which they can be observed. Second, within such transactions, perceiving is always done by a particular person from his own unique position in space and time and with his own combination of experiences and needs. And third, within the particular transaction and operating from his own perspective, each of us, through perceiving, creates for himself his own psychological environment which he believes exists independent of the experience. Ittelsen and Cantril's observations speak as well to the third premise which identifies human communication as transactional rather than interactional. Borrowing from Dewey and Bentley's interpretation of the term "transaction,"[4] neither a perception nor an object-as-perceived exists independent of the total life situation of which both perception and object are a part. Implicit in this interpretation is the recognition that all parts of the situation enter into it as active participants, and that they owe their very existence as encountered in the situation to this fact of active participation and do not appear as already existing entities merely interacting with each other in a linear configuration without affecting their own identities. As the fourth premise asserts, it is only because we can engage in symbolic behavior that we can communicate, and only through communication can we socialize. As Hugh Duncan observes, "society arises in, and continues to exist through, the communication of significant symbols."[5] Symbols serve as the public element of our personal act of perception. The "meaning" of the symbol resides in the "self," thereby rendering the concept of "message transfer" totally misleading; there is no objective message to be transferred. There is no "accurate" interpretation of the symbols; there is only an interpretation by other which, more or less, corresponds with that of self. Finally, the fifth premise identifies human communication as contextually relational. What man experiences through communicating is, in the phraseology of Kenneth Williams, "things becoming what they are between self and other;"[6] in other words, what is critical to the definition of the act are the relationships obtaining among the participating elements. Whatever relationship predominates will label the communication that will conventionally ensue. Since each human communication act is a social act, it thereby shares the attributes of sociation: publicness,

corporateness and personalness. In other words, every communicative act contains elements which correspond to relational contexts recognized in society and generally identifiable as being eith personal, corporate, or public. Although Hugh Duncan's terminology and breakdown differs a bit, it can be argued that his five "audiences" in "social courtship" provide the basis for the identification of this tripartite categorization of all human relationships obtainable in society. Duncan offers the following theoretical proposition:

> Five types of audiences are addressed in social courtship: These are, first, general publics ("They"); second, community guardians ("We"); third, others significant to us as friends and confidants with whom we talk intimately ("Thou"); fourth, the selves we address inwardly in soliloquy (the "I" talking to its "Me"); and fifth, ideal audiences whom we address as ultimate sources of social order ("It").[7]

The first type seems to correspond relatively obviously with one "public" relational context: "general publics" identifies "public" relationships. The second and last types identify authority, and, hence, comply with our "corporate" relational context by virtue of the hierarchial relationships thereby established. And the third and fourth of Duncan's types can be logically incorporated into our third category — personal; the "thou" relationship is self-evident, while self-inflection can hardly be classified as anything other than a very personal relationship. We are left, then, with three relational contexts which serve to classify, generically, all human relationships; the same three, in fact, which are presented in each and every communicative act — a duality which is not surprising, if, as Duncan, Cooley, Dewey and others argue, communication is sociation. To briefly elaborate on this asserted duality, each communicative act is "public" insofar as the "symbolic transaction" has "significance" in the Meadian sense of that term; each communicative act is "corporate" insofar as it is socially relational, and social relationships, in turn, are expressed through hierarchies; and each communicative act is "personal" insofar as "perception" is ever unique.

It is not our purpose at this time to argue the merits of the foregoing basic premises; instead, we wish merely to note that it is out of these basic understandings that a generic definition of human communication can be generated. Reducing these five premises to their basic conceptual elements yields five critical terms: self, perception, transaction, symbol, relationships. If we are willing to argue that these five elements identify the essential ingredients of any act of communication, and we are so willing to argue, then each must meet the test of any defining characteristic — if any one element is absent or non-operative, the act cannot occur, and, conversely, when all are present and operative the act cannot not occur.

Let us turn to each element and briefly address its essential contribution to the act it is being asked to describe. Self: obviously "self" cannot perceive, be aware of or cognizant of, or in any way comprehend or apprehend any act of which it is not a participant — a condition of which it is some critics' wont to ignore. Perception: equally obvious, "self" cannot serve as the point of origin for any act of which it is unaware; "self" can be physically present with other but unless "self" perceives other it cannot stand in relation to that of which it is non-conscious. Transaction: without taking any metaphysical position regarding the existence of a "real" world independent of experience,

it is abundantly clear that the world-as-perceived has no meaning and cannot be defined independent of the experience; the world as we experience it is the product of perception, not the cause of it, as Herbert Blumer observes, "the nature of an object — of any and every object — consists of the meaning that it has for the person for whom it is an object," and furthermore, "meaning . . . is a social product."[8] Symbol: a symbol is a conventionalized sign granted meaning by the missing parts of the contexts from which it draws its delegated efficacy (an enlarged perspective of I. A. Richard's understanding of a "word");[9] as Dewey, Mead, Duncan, Langer, Cassirer, and a host of others argue, human beings use symbolic forms by which to transact with one another, and, as argued previously, they serve as the mediation through which existence is created.[10] Relationships: as Carl Rogers identifies the formative aspect of communication in the phrase that lends title to his thoughts, "On Becoming a Person," so Kenneth Williams underscores relational factors as the proper "subject matter of a human science of communication," he further elaborates his statement by describing the subject matter as "comprised of transitive social relations never fully realized as entelechies but always and only as indicators of relational direction."[11]

As cursory as the above observations may be, the argument is implicit that each of the five elements is indeed essential to the communication act; consequently, it only remains to unite the five into a coherent statement for the definition to be complete. Human communication thus becomes: the symbolic transaction of perceived relationships between self and other.

Having isolated a generic definition of the act which unifies our discipline, it appears as literally "academic" that a re-structuring of our field of inquiry is mandatory — a re-structuring consistent with and supportive of a unitary concept of communication. The initial reaction might be that this understanding of communication militates against any division or "major" apportionment of the discipline. Common sense tells us, however, that the breadth of knowledge encompassed by the unitary concept is so vast that for purely pragmatic reasons it is both necessary and desirable that "areas of concentration" be identified which represent an internally consistent, coherent set of dimensions by which the toal field may be apportioned into particular perspectives. One resolution of this seeming paradox is found in the schema which evolves out of the definition itself, by virtue of the relational contexts it recognizes as obtaining in society — personal, corporate, and public. These contexts classify more or less discrete categories of communicative acts determined by the constraints each predominating relationship imposes upon the act itself and, hence, identify three viable areas of particularization. Unquestionably there are other schema which would serve to re-structure the units of inquiry with equal of greater clarity and precision; but whatever the schema employed, as long as it emanates from and is reflective of an integrative understanding of communication, it will represent a far more defensible apportionment of a philosophically sound discipline than is currently available. It will also provide the foundation for a degree of universality across methods courses that presently are distinguished by diversity.

Indeed, as Hugh Prather reminds us, each of us seems to have a built-in resistance to change, and that is good; it tends to insure the preservation of ideas worthy of retention, for no discipline can sustain itself by denying its heritage. Neither, however, can a discipline maintain its integrity without periodic adjustment to philosophically accommodate the "new." To ignore

either is to risk the consequences of condemning the future to eternal "justification" of "continuation" rather than dedicating that future to substantive inquiry for the assurance of professional and academic growth.

FOOTNOTES

1. Hugh Prather. Notes to Myself. Moab, Utah: Real People Press, 1970, p. 22.

2. The authors wish to gratefully acknowledge all respondents, as several institutions dod not offer certified programs in "Speech" at this time and hence were not included in this study.

3. William Ittelson and Hadley Cantril. Perception: A Transactional Approach. New York: Random House, Inc., 1954.

4. John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley. Knowing and the Known. Boston: Beacon Press, 1949.

5. Hugh Dalziel Duncan. Symbols in Society. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

6. Kenneth R. Williams. "Reflections on a Human Science of Communication, Journal of Communication, Vol 23 (September, 1973), p. 241.

7. Duncan, p. 81.

8. Herbert Blumer. Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969, p. 11.

9. I.A.Richards. The Philosophy of Rhetoric. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc. 1936.

10. Suzanne K. Langer. Philosophical Sketches. New York: Mentor, 1964; George Herbert Mead. Mind, Self, and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934; E. Cassirer. The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. 3 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953.

11. Williams, p. 241.